

WHY DO NEW YORKERS WANT TO DIE? SUICIDE ANALYZED.

This Year Seems Sure to Break the Doleful Record --- Poison the Favorite Means.

Is the season of suicides in New York? And it is the season of suicides in a city of suicides. Eighteen hundred and ninety-six has brought the desire for death to many residents of this big town, and the number who want to die seems to be steadily increasing as the year grows older. No more fascinating question could be asked than this: Why do New Yorkers want to die? And in the answer to it lies much philosophy and many lessons. Among the other things it shows is this: Just as "in anticipation lies the greatest pleasure," so also in anticipation lies the greatest pain. It is the fear of disaster, not the realization of it, which drives most people to the point where life is hateful and death dear. Actual poverty, for instance, has forced only fourteen to kill themselves since January 1, while business worries—which may be tersely classified as the fear of poverty—seemed so awful that twenty-four unhappy beings preferred to end their struggles in the dark days of the year.

Only one woman, however, was driven to suicide by the philosophical mind, is proof of the weight with which the burden of responsibility for others rests upon the shoulders of the man, even in these days of the new woman. There are few men who would be afraid to die to face the world and begin again if they were alone in their misfortune. It is the seeming necessity for keeping up appearances—the appearances demanded by society—which fills unfortunate lovers with despair. For the man without family this necessity can scarcely exist. That this reasoning is not false has been proven by this year's suicides. Careful study of the details of each of these twenty-four suicides shows that except in certain special cases the victims were men with wives and children. To them business reverses most often meant more misery for their loved ones than for themselves. Suicide in such circumstances may be regarded as particularly cowardly, but to the men who yielded to the dreadful impulse circumstances, of course, made it seem inevitable.

But there were other fears than that of poverty which led unhappy human beings to take their own lives this year. Three poor girls sought death because they feared their sin would find them out—fear of shame. Another indication of the terror with which the prospect of society's disapproval inspires us.

One woman feared that her husband would catch her in a lie which she had told—the first one (she solemnly averred in her dying statement) which had ever passed her lips. She could not bear to be alive when the man she loved discovered this wrongdoing. Not seldom do such hysterical emotional situations lead their wretched victims to suicide. Two mothers killed themselves because their children were dangerously ill. The thought of living after their loved ones had passed away was unbearable to them. None in the long and doleful list of the year's suicides is so pitifully pathetic as these two.

One man, worked up to a frenzy of nerves by a long effort to untangle a woful snarl in his accounts, committed suicide because he was afraid that his employers would accuse him of embezzlement. Another, after having worked for years upon an invention, was unable to endure the suspense of waiting for a reply from the Patent Office after he had successfully constructed his model. He killed himself because he was afraid his patent would not be granted. Four criminals committed suicide before their trials, because they feared that they would be sent to prison. It is interesting here to note that the despair of imprisonment could have had no influence here, because the men were all old offenders. Each had at least once known the woe of confinement behind bolts and bars, and preferred death to its repetition. During the same period only one man killed himself after he had actually been sent to prison.

Love—that subtle sentiment, which "makes the world go round," which brings to humanity its greatest peace and loudest turmoil—plays a comparatively insignificant part in the suicides of the year. Only twelve people killed themselves because their loved ones had passed away. Does the fact that six of these were women prove what many folk believe—that woman's love is, after all, the strongest? One of the unhappy lovers whose disappointment was his death, was a Chinaman.

Grief drove five to death. Three men, long happily married, committed suicide because their wives had died. The prospect of life without the companionship of the women whom they loved was too dark and dreary for endurance. One woman killed herself because her son had died, and three could not live after the death of a

woman friend, not one woman in the list found life unbearable because she had lost her husband!

All the five suicides ascribable to the realization of disgrace were men. A son in the penitentiary; a daughter gone wrong; a sin found out, accounted for three of them. The fourth was a pawnbroker who could not endure the horror of having been fined by the Mayor. The fifth was strange. A medical student killed himself in Chicago because a man of the same name had been arrested. The event was widely chronicled in the newspapers and his friends joked him about it. Poor student! You would not have made a great physician. Good doctors must be built of sterner stuff.

Eleven blasé mortals hurried by violent ways into some other world because life bored them. They were just tired of existence. Old earth held no pleasing novelties for them. And one of them was a professional fun-maker—a minstrel.

And now we come to the blackest, most sombre list of all—the list of those who had taken "serpents into their mouths to eat away their brains," the list of those driven to self-destruction by drink and drugs. Of them there were nineteen—more than can be ascribed to any other cause. It is fair to suppose, say experts, that drink was a contributing cause to half the suicides.

allotted in the classification to poverty. Perhaps the least blamable of all those who killed themselves were those driven to it by disease. Of these, twelve were absolutely blameless, for their self-murder was done while they were insane. Twenty-three others were sufferers from incurable or acutely painful maladies, who chose death in preference to continued agony.

A round dozen of misers threw their lives away for causes which are beyond classification. They are all strange and all seem pitifully inadequate. One thief killed himself rather than submit to arrest for a trivial offence, although he had frequently suffered incarceration on more serious charges. One private in the United States Army blew his brains out because he was "tired of soldiering." A rich man, retired from very active business life, committed suicide as a variant of a monotonous life of idleness. A genius who had made fame and money with many machines killed himself because one unimportant invention would not work. A man and woman died together so that they might "know the hum of harps and soft carresses of flutes in Heaven." A wife sought death because her husband "raised his hand against her." A father preferred death to seeing his money go toward supporting his children in idleness. They now spend it unchecked, of course. A woman died rather than be a burden on her comfortably circumstanced mother. One woman suicide was just "lonely." A Frenchman thought the fact that he could not get a small consignment of cigars out of bond sufficient cause for death. A woman wrote before she snuffed her life candle out: "I find life too unimportant."

That "the wages of sin is death" was proved by two girls who killed themselves after they had run giddy races in the Tenderloin.

Does suicide pay? That is a question which cannot be answered. That it was wildly foolish in four cases is plain. Two mothers killed themselves because their little ones were ill. Both children recovered, and now are motherless. An accountant who had been careless com-

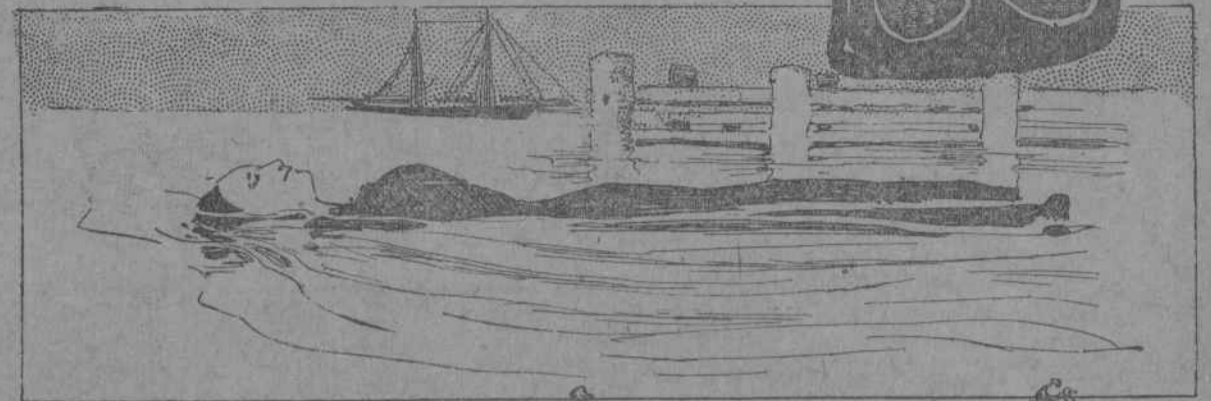
HOW THEY KILL THEMSELVES.

This picture at a glance shows the methods by which New Yorkers who are tired of life seek death. Out of a total of 208 for the year to date the poison bottle killed 64, the revolver 56, drowning 15, and the knife 12.

mitted suicide because he feared that his employers would charge him with embezzlement. After his death an expert pronounced his absolute honesty proved by an examination of his books. An inventor sought death because he feared his patents would not be granted. A week later they were allowed. Heirs will draw the profits. And how did suicide affect the families of the men who died because of business worries? It is kinder for a man to fail and take his dear ones down to poverty with him, than it is for him to kill himself and let them go down to poverty alone, dragged deeper by the dead weights of suicide disgrace.

Is suicide a sin? Only one important American has ever disclaimed it, and there be many who will take as strong issue with Colonel Ingersoll on this point as they will on his general views of religious things.

Philosophers aver that the moving cause in most suicides is vanity. It would not be hard to figure out that some variation of vanity was at the bottom of seven-tenths of the 180 cases which have been glanced at in this analysis. An argument in the philosophers' favor lies in the fact that almost all suicides elaborately explain

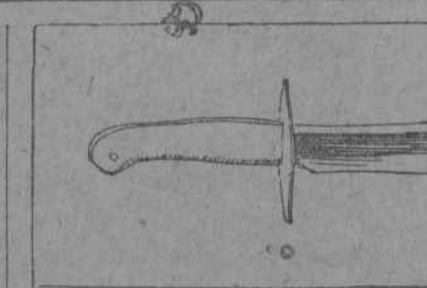


their motives ere they die—they take the trouble to set their reasons most prominently plain before the world they scorn to live in. Since January 1, there have been 208 suicides. Of these, as indicated, 180 have left letters or elaborate verbal explanations of their deeds.

That same element of vanity has long been said to enter into the methods of suicide as deeply as it does into the causes for it. Women, it has been observed, generally try to die in such a way that their faces will not be disfigured, and that they will make attractive looking corpses when found. Nearly all of the women among these 208 used poison. Neither the pistol, the knife nor the rope was popular with them. Classified exactly, the 208 suicides chose the following means for bringing death's sweet oblivion:

Poison	64
Shooting	56
Gas	25
Hanging	23
Drowning	15
Knife	12
Miscellaneous	23

Fifty-one women to 157 men is almost exactly the ordinary percentage of males and females in New York's suicide list, but this year's aggregate is tremendous. For the past five years New York's annual total of suicides has averaged about 250. In the first six months and two weeks of this year there have been 208—only 42 less than what



has heretofore been the yearly average. Only one year—1893, the worst of the panic time—has ever surpassed 1896.

The popularity of gas has been steadily growing of late years among the unfortunate who want to leave the earth and try their luck somewhere else. This year's record of twenty has never before been approached. And it is used in new ways. The number of people who merely seal up the openings in the room and turn on the deadly fluid is decreasing, and there are more of those who elaborately arrange with rubber tubes and what not to lead the gas directly from the burners into their mouths.

Carbolic acid is the favorite poison among New York suicides, probably because it is easily obtained at the drug stores. There can, indeed, be no other reason, for it is well known that death by this poison is most painful and is cer-

tain to leave its dreadful traces in distorted faces. Next to carbolic acid comes morphine—the insidious drug which lulls the death-seeker into a painless and everlasting sleep and almost always leaves its victim smiling. Paris green comes next—it also is easily obtained. In the 208 cases were three suicides by opium. Two used muriatic acid as the lethal draught—a strange choice, for muriatic acid literally burns away what flesh it touches, and when swallowed destroys tongue, mouth and throat. A Chinese woman used an unusual drug—cyanide of potassium—while a "man" sought an even stranger means of reaching entrance into the lands Confucius tells of. He took chloride of lime.

Most of the suicides classed as "miscellaneous" were accomplished by jumps of some sort. Several jumped from roofs of windows, two or three threw themselves before moving trains. One man deliberately laid his head on a rail and patiently awaited in a most difficult position until an engine came along and wiped him out. Almost all of those who shot themselves used revolvers. Few New Yorkers own guns.

The most unlucky days this year, so far as suicides go, have been January 5 and June 22. On each of these days five died by their own hands.

In Paris such dates are held to have a very particular, superstitious significance by a certain class.

A STRANGE PIG.

With the Face of a Pleasant Looking Old Gentleman.

A pig with a human face is in the possession of D. A. Sammis, of No. 64 Vanderbilt avenue, Brooklyn. It is one of the most remarkable monsters ever produced by an aberration of Nature.

The pig is dead and is preserved in a spirit jar, which enables its strangely human features to be inspected.

The pig's head differs from a human being's only in having the long, pointed ears belonging to normal members of its family. This gives it somewhat the appearance of a goblin or other creature of the imagination, with a partly human shape.

The head, apart from the ears, is like that of an old man. It is free from all hair except eyebrows. These are well grown and are a remarkable abnormality in a pig. The forehead is high and the skull rounded at the top and of human shape. It suggests considerable intelligence and a well balanced character.

The whole face is oval in shape and is similar to that of an old man of dignified appearance. There is rather too little nose for a very good looking man; but still, this member is distinctly human in shape. It is small and snub, and is utterly different from the snout of the pig.

The chin is heavy and well rounded. It is perhaps the most human of all the features. The eyes are much larger than those of an ordinary pig. The skin is as white and smooth as that of a delicate woman. Although it must be called a monster, on account of its strange physical abnormality, the little pig is not repulsive. On the contrary, it is quite amusing in appearance. If it were alive and well it would be a decidedly interesting animal to have about the house.

How it came to die is a curious story. It was born on May 12 last on a ranch near Arevalo, on the island of Porto Rico, in the West Indies. The mother produced only this one animal at the time, itself a very unusual circumstance.

In spite of its grotesque appearance, the little pig seemed to enjoy good physical health. But his mother had no affection for him. She was disgusted and alarmed at his abnormal features. She gave him little nourishment, and in consequence he died on May 18. The fact that he remained alive for six days in a half starved condition shows that he must have entered life with fair health.

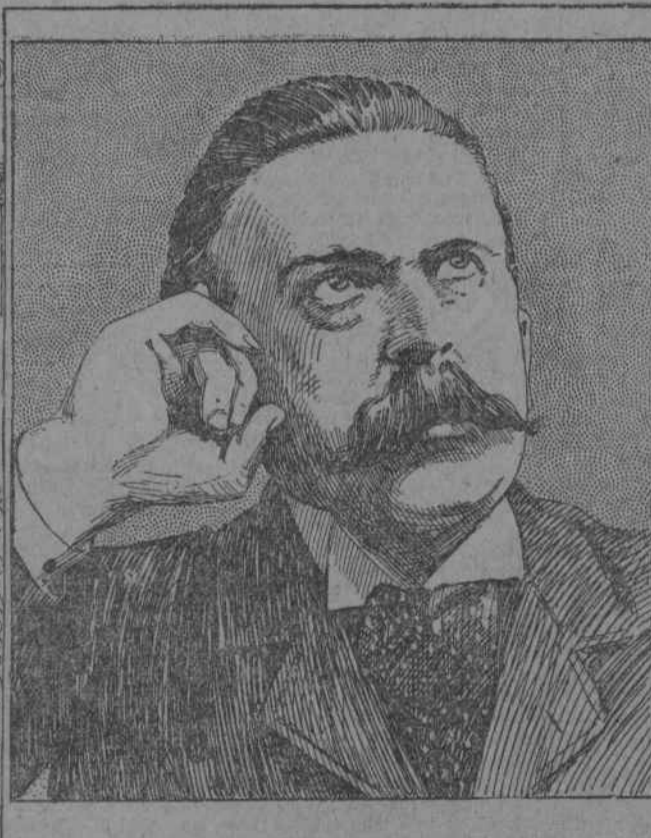
The mother is a perfectly black sow, and perhaps this fact increased her feeling of repulsion for a young one with human features and a very white skin.

HOW A MAN LOOKS WHEN HE WANTS TO DIE

Photographs of a Hypnotic Subject Who Had Been Convinced of the Necessity for Suicide.



Ready to Die Because He Thought He Had an Incurable Disease.



Ready to Die Because He Had Been Disappointed in Love.



Ready to Die Because of Financial Worry and Disappointments.

Just how a person looks whose despair has reached the climax—that dreadful climax which admits no cure but death—few people have even had an opportunity of seeing. There was only one way in which this strange facial study could be presented, and that was by means of hypnotism. At the request of the Journal Dr. Charles Simon, of No. 114 East Fifty-sixth street, who daily uses hypnotism in the course of his regular practice, selected his very best subject, and, after throwing him into the hypnotic trance, "suggested" to him successively four reasons why he must kill himself. Photographs were taken of him while he was under the dreadful influence of each of these four varieties of desperate despair. They tell their own story of the frightful battle of overwhelming emotions which must have been going on in his mind and which was plainly indexed in his face.

In each case the climax of despair was gradually worked up by adroit statements of the misfortunes which had befallen him, and in each case when the suggestion of suicide was brought to his mind he grasped it as a drowning man would grasp a straw—as a means of delivery from frightful mental agony. As each suggestion succeeded another there was a sudden kaleidoscope change. While under the suggestion of disappointed love when the word suicide was suggested he changed his head from a dejected expression to one in which he looked up and was photographed. The doctor said: "You have been madly in love with a beautiful woman, but she does not care for you; you do not know which way to turn to keep her out of your mind, to stop that terrible feeling of disappointment and sorrow. You cannot live thus longer or you will go crazy. You have only one chance left, and that is by taking your own life."

Then the camera was snapped and the picture taken. After that came financial worry. The doctor said, very slowly and very distinctly: "You are a business man and you transact a great business. Several people have failed to pay you, and you have obligations you cannot meet. Your notes will not be taken up by the bank. You must fail. The only thing that will save you from this disgrace is suicide."

His breath came short and quick, as he raised his head as if searching in his mind for some other means of getting out of his financial difficulty. This, however, lasted but for a moment, when he seemed to give up as though in despair. A melancholy look came over his face, as if he might be some hunted animal. There is no doubt that his mind and his face were those of a man who was ready to die of despair.

When the doctor reached "sickness" as a cause for suicide he said to the subject, who had been allowed a moment of rest: "You have been very, very ill. You have been, and are, sick from an incurable disease. To live would but be a means of prolonging a life which is of no use to yourself and others. The only way to escape from this is to go through that door which is open to every one—the door of suicide."

A suggestion of hopeless poverty followed that of financial worry. The suggestion in this case was as follows: "You haven't a cent in the world; you haven't a friend. You are starving and there is no prospect of food or work. Your rent is due and you have nothing with which to meet it. In a few hours you will be homeless. There is only one thing left for you to do and that is to commit suicide."

There was a twisting and turning of the head from side to side as though he were trying to escape, but there came to his mind no means of overcoming his poverty. The expression on his face was, strangely enough, that of a man who was contemplating the commission of some crime. This altered, however, when the idea of suicide became firmly fixed. With a despairing look he grasped it as though there was a chance of escape left him.

Taken all in all there probably was never a more interesting series of photographs taken than those which are reproduced herewith and by which the camera for the first time records the facial expression of a man whose life has reached that melancholy pass where death alone can ease his misery.